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After the Gunpowder

Something Had to Be Done

A story about courage

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I was sitting in the rotten, spongy seat, and tried to figure out what my next move could be. Something had to be done. Life was getting away in the worst possible way - slowly, day by day. In the row in front, five seats to the right, was a big bearded fella. He made some noises, enough to get the attention of everyone around. Then he pulled out his phone and raised it high, beaming the light across the cinema. He was entertaining himself at the expense of the masses.

Something had to be done. I had that thought in my head. I hated cowards. I remembered all the times when I was a coward, every single one. With fights, girls, responsibilities, and big decisions. I hated it because I always felt this fire in me, this bravery to face the world, and I resented the spirit for leaving me at those times. At some point in my life, I made a decision to just push. I told myself - even if everything in you wants to run the other way, even if the skies start to fall, you will persist and continue, pushing forward. I lived that way for the last couple of years, and it brought me a lot of trouble, but also some sort of peace. I was honest, and I was what I always wanted to be, and that was a great gift I gave myself.

Something had to be done, I thought. I barely got my peace back after that woman, my special woman. I spent my time between part-time jobs, one in marketing and another in furniture assembly. My novels were crap, my stories were far from great. My parents were getting old. What could be the next move?

Something had to be done. I started to think about the job offer I had received a few days ago. America. Relocation to the Cayman Islands. Three-year contract. Three years of hell, with fake smiles, fake food, and the illusion of grandeur that came at the expense of other nations.

I looked at the big screen. Men were entering the Zone. Stalker said to the Writer: "There's no need to speak. You must only concentrate and recall all your past life. When a man thinks of the past, he becomes kinder."

I thought about my past for a moment. Then I thought about the Cayman Islands. What an escape that would be. The light from the phone was still illuminating the cinema. The bearded bastard laughed while scrolling through funny videos. I got up and punched him in the face as hard as I could.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

My name is Ratko. I come from the Balkans. I mainly write about existentialism, the search for meaning, outsiders, the absurd, and that specific sort of tavern stoicism that exists around here. My writing is a mix of reality and fiction, somewhere between recollecting what happened and what could have happened. There's a bit of magic realism in there, too.

I write in English, Serbian, and sometimes in Spanish. New stories are published weekly on my Substack newsletter, After the Gunpowder.

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